



# Asthma and the School Child



**Teamwork is required to create a positive and healthy school environment for the child with asthma. Parents, the clinician, teachers, coaches, school nurse, school principal, and the child are part of the team.**

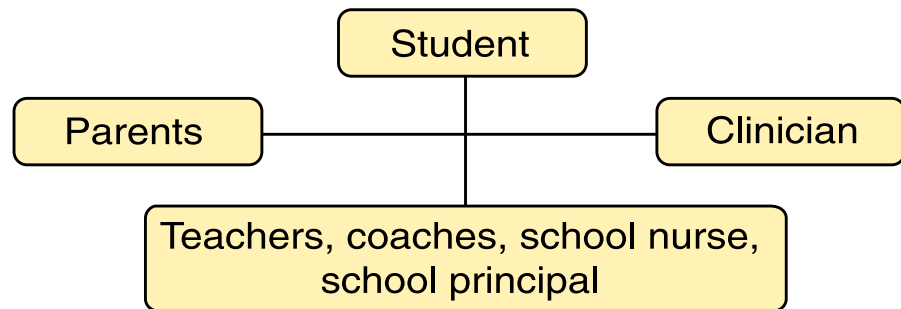
**School nurses are effective allies in decreasing days lost from school and in promoting students' asthma management skills. Every school should have a school nurse.**

The EPA's "Tools for Schools" helps schools plan improvements in indoor air quality and can be ordered by calling 1-800-438-4318.

## Asthma and the School Child

**S**ince school is the child's home away from home, it is one of the most important environments to safeguard. The physician should work closely with school personnel to help them understand asthma, its impact, and how to meet the special needs of children with asthma.

### THE SCHOOL ASTHMA TEAM



**The child with well-controlled asthma can participate fully in all school activities.**

### GIVE THE SCHOOL AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE CHILD.

Include:

- The early warning signs of an asthma episode
- What medications the student uses and how they are taken
- When to contact the physician or emergency room

### Common asthma triggers in the school environment:

- Dust mites
- Chalk dust
- Animals
- Strong odors (perfumes, paints, chemicals)
- Exercise

## **What do school personnel need to know?**

### **Teachers, coaches, and school health personnel need to know:**

- The early warning signs of asthma episodes.
- How to treat an asthma episode, including:
  - ⇒ what medications are used.
  - ⇒ how the medications are used.
  - ⇒ when to contact the physician or emergency room.
- What medications the student uses.
  - ⇒ common side effects of asthma medications that warrant communication with the parents and/or clinician: nervousness, nausea, drowsiness, jitteriness, hyperactivity.
- How to help the child with asthma follow his/her management plan at school.
  - ⇒ what triggers the student's asthma.
  - ⇒ how the student premedicates to prevent exercise-induced symptoms (and symptoms from other "anticipated" exposures, e.g., allergens, cold air).
  - ⇒ how to minimize exposure to triggers (e.g., allergens, irritants) in the classroom and school environment that can worsen the student's asthma.
- Whether the student has physician and parent approval to carry and use his/her inhalers.
- Phone numbers for the physician, the parents, and the emergency room.

See sample School Asthma Management Plan, page 119.

### **School health personnel should also know:**

- How to use devices to deliver asthma medications: metered-dose inhalers, dry powder inhalers, nebulizers, spacers/holding chambers.
- How to use a peak flow meter.

### **Taking medications at school may be difficult.**

- Many children with asthma want to hide their need for medication.
- Poorly informed school authorities sometimes make it impossible for children to take their medication.
- It may be disruptive for children to go to another part of the school building (nurse's or secretary's office) to take their medication.

**Students with asthma need to have prompt and easy access to their medications. In most cases they should be permitted to carry and use their medications, with physician and parent approval.**

**Work with the child, the parents, and the school to solve specific problems that arise.**

**Work together to keep the child in school and symptom-free.**

## **What can you do?**

### **The clinician can:**

- Provide the school with an action plan for handling asthma episodes.
- Provide information to school personnel to increase their understanding about what asthma is and how to meet the needs of children with asthma.
- Work with the student and parents to increase awareness about asthma. Asthma curricula for children include Open Airways, Power Breathing, Peak Performance USA, and Asthma Awareness (see Resource List, page 121).

### **Give the physical education teacher and/or coach specific written instructions. Include:**

- The nature of exercise-induced asthma
- Which medications are used to prevent exercise-induced asthma and how to use them
- Other techniques to prevent exercise-induced symptoms (e.g., warm-up period)
- Warning signs of an asthma episode
- A copy of the School Asthma Management Plan (see sample, page 119)

*Proper education will help avoid exercise-induced asthma episodes, embarrassment, or the possibility of the child avoiding exercise.*



## Encourage parents to:

- Meet with the teacher, school nurse, and, perhaps, the principal at the beginning of the school year to make them aware of the child's asthma.
- Explain the child's asthma, what medications he/she uses, and the possible side-effects.
- Explain that the student with asthma should be treated "normally" like other children.
- Encourage school personnel to allow the student to take his/her medications as required, without making it "a big deal."
- Use the "How Asthma Friendly is Your School?" checklist (see page 118) to identify areas in the child's school that might be improved.

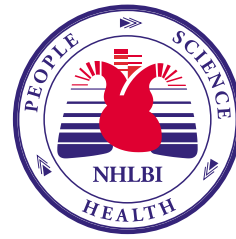
## Be aware of common school problems faced by the student with asthma:

- High absenteeism is possible due to asthma symptoms or to doctor visits.
- Children with asthma may avoid school or activities. Parents, physicians, and school personnel (e.g., teachers, nurses, coaches) need to work with the child to encourage participation.
- Children may avoid going to the school office or nurse's office to use their inhalers before exercise. Allowing children to carry their inhalers with them avoids this problem.
- Side effects from medication may alter the child's ability to perform. Teachers need information on side effects and when to notify parents and/or the physician.





National Asthma Education and  
Prevention Program



## How Asthma-Friendly is Your School?

Children with asthma need proper support at school to keep their asthma under control and to be fully active. Use the questions below to find out how well the school assists children with asthma:

1. Is the school **free of tobacco smoke** all of the time, including during school-sponsored events?
2. Does the school maintain **good indoor air quality**? Does it **reduce or eliminate allergens and irritants** that can make asthma worse?

Allergens and irritants include pets with fur or feathers, mold, dust mites (for example, in carpets and upholstery), cockroaches, and strong odors or fumes from such products as pesticides, paint, perfumes, and cleaning chemicals.

3. Is there a **school nurse** in the school all day, every day? If not, is a nurse regularly available to the school to help write plans and give guidance for students with asthma about medicines, physical education, and field trips?
4. Can children take **medicines** at school as recommended by their doctor and parents? May children carry their own asthma medicines?
5. Does the school have an **emergency plan** for taking care of a child with a severe asthma episode (attack)? Is it made clear what to do? Who to call? When to call?
6. Does someone **teach school staff** about asthma, asthma management plans, and asthma medicines? Does someone **teach all students** about asthma and how to help a classmate who has it?
7. Do students have **good options for fully and safely participating in physical education** class and recess? (For example, do students have access to their medicine before exercise? Can they choose modified or alternative activities when medically necessary?)

If the answer to any question is no, students may be facing obstacles to asthma control. Asthma out of control can hinder a student's attendance, participation, and progress in school. School staff, health professionals, and parents can work together to remove obstacles and to promote students' health and education.

# School Asthma Management Plan

## Student Asthma Action Card

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Room: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph (H): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph (W): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph (H): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Ph (W): \_\_\_\_\_

ID Photo

Emergency Phone Contact #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Relationship Phone

Emergency Phone Contact #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name Relationship Phone

Physician Student Sees for Asthma: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Physician: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

## Daily Asthma Management Plan

Identify the things which start an asthma episode (check each that applies to the student).

☐ Exercise ☐ Strong odors or fumes ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Respiratory infections ☐ Chalk dust \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Change in temperature ☐ Carpets in the room ☐ Food \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Animals ☐ Pollens ☐ Molds

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

## Control of School Environment

(List any environmental control measures, pre-medications, and/or dietary restrictions that the student needs to prevent an asthma episode.)

## Peak Flow Monitoring

Personal Best Peak Flow Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Monitoring Times: \_\_\_\_\_

## Daily Medication Plan

Name	Amount	When to Use
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

\*Developed by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA);  
Endorsed by the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program (NAEPP)



## School Asthma Management Plan (continued)

### Emergency Plan

Emergency action is necessary when the student has symptoms such as \_\_\_\_\_ or has a peak flow reading of \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Steps to take during an asthma episode:

1. Give medications as listed below.
2. Have student return to classroom if \_\_\_\_\_
3. Contact parent if \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Seek emergency medical care if the student has any of the following:**

✓ No improvement 15-20 minutes after initial treatment with medication and a relative cannot be reached.

✓ Peak flow of

✓ Hard time breathing:

- Chest and neck are pulled in with breathing.
- Child is hunched over.
- Child is struggling to breathe.

✓ Trouble walking or talking.

✓ Stops playing and can't start activity again.

✓ Lips or fingernails are gray or blue.

**IF THIS HAPPENS,  
GET EMERGENCY  
HELP NOW!**

#### Emergency Asthma Medications

Name	Amount	When to Use
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____

#### Comments/Special Instructions

#### For Inhaled Medications

- ☐ I have instructed (name) \_\_\_\_\_ in the proper way to use his/her medications. It is my professional opinion that he/she should be allowed to carry and use that medication by him/herself.
- ☐ It is my opinion that \_\_\_\_\_ should not carry his/her inhaled medication by him/herself.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Resource Organizations for Patients and School Staff

Contact the organizations listed below for information about asthma and helpful ideas for making school policies and practices more asthma-friendly. Federal and State laws are there to help children with asthma.

### **National Asthma Education and Prevention Program**

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute  
Information Center  
P.O. Box 30105  
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105  
(301) 435-0202  
Internet: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

### **Allergy and Asthma Network/Mothers of Asthmatics, Inc.**

2751 Prosperity Avenue, Suite 150  
Fairfax, VA 22031  
(800) 878-4403 or (703) 641-9595  
Internet: <http://www.aanma.org>

### **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology**

611 East Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(800) 822-ASMA or (414) 272-6071  
Internet: <http://www.aaaai.org>

### **American Academy of Pediatrics**

141 Northwest Point Boulevard  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098  
(800) 433-9016 or (847) 228-5005  
Internet: <http://www.aap.org>

### **American Association for Respiratory Care**

11030 Ables Lane  
Dallas, TX 75229  
(972) 243-2272  
Internet: <http://www.aarc.org>

### **American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology**

85 West Algonquin Road, Suite 550  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005  
(800) 842-7777 or (847) 427-1200  
Internet: <http://acaai.org>

### **The American Lung Association**

For the affiliate nearest you, call  
(800) LUNG USA  
Internet: <http://www.lungusa.org>

### **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America**

1233 Twentieth Street, NW  
Suite 402  
Washington, DC 20036  
(800) 7-ASTHMA or (202) 466-7643  
Internet: <http://www.aaafa.org>

### **Healthy Kids: The Key to Basics**

Educational Planning for Students with  
Chronic Health Conditions  
79 Elmore Street  
Newton, MA 02459-1137  
(617) 965-9637  
E-mail: [erg-hk@juno.com](mailto:erg-hk@juno.com)

### **U.S. Department of Education**

Office for Civil Rights, Customer Service Team  
Mary E. Switzer Building  
330 C Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20202-1328  
(800) 421-3481 or (202) 205-5413  
Internet: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR>

### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Indoor Environments Division  
401 M Street, S.W. (6604J)  
Washington, DC 20460  
(202) 233-9370  
Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse  
(800) 438-4318  
Internet: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq>

**Asthma can be controlled;  
expect nothing less.**

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